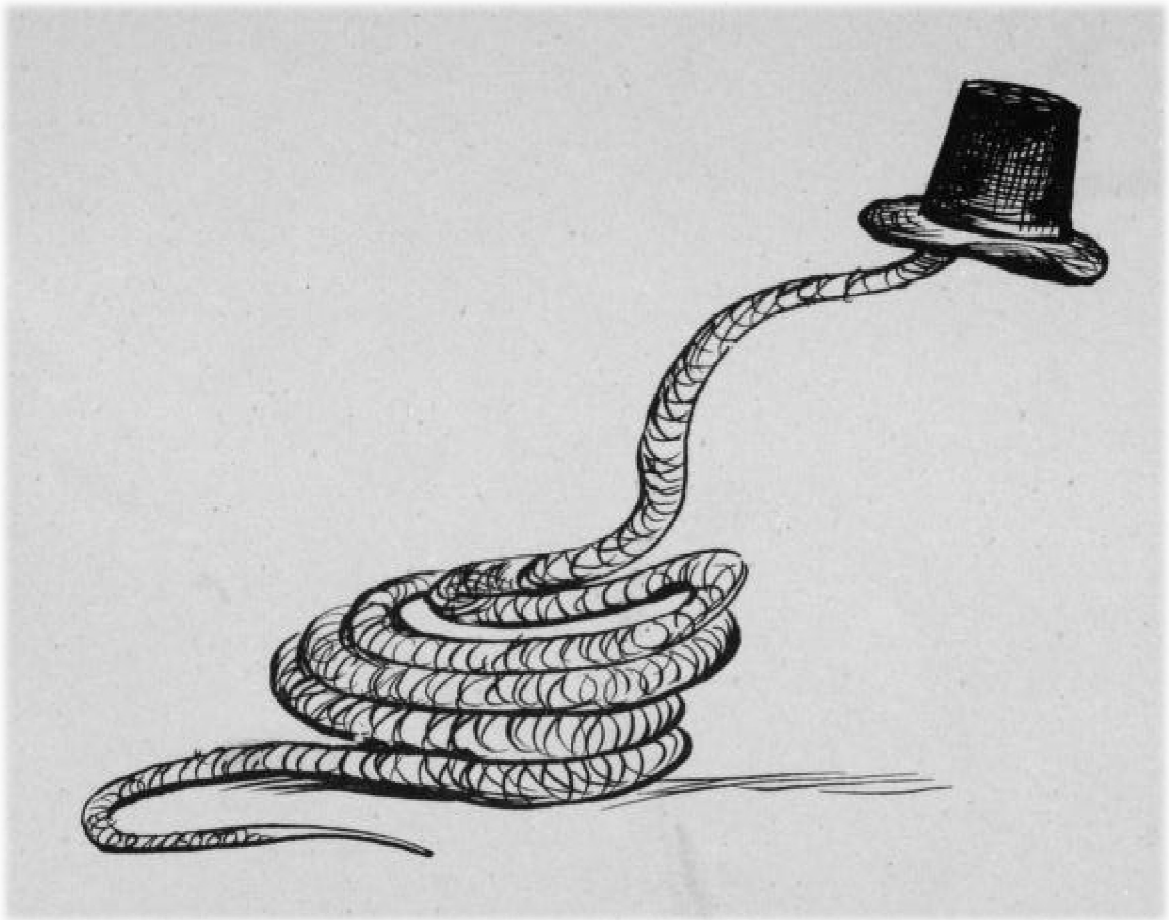


VIII



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

The reasons for the late release date of this edition of the magazine are twofold:

My own laziness

A loss of a review ... (I do not want to go into details)

It is really hard to top the loss of a completed piece in times when your motivation seems to have hit rock bottom already. After some skipping through a good number of files, I stumbled over an earlier version, which had consisted of the introduction, which had been written some time ago. The problem is the following: Microsoft Word 2007 has the weird tendency to change the status of the file to 'write protected' while I am typing texts. So, in order to accept the changes it is necessary to save it under a new name and I have therefore a lot of different versions at times. I have no idea what causes this problem and there are also no solutions at hand; neither from Microsoft or a Third-Party Developer. When you use Google and search for this particular issue, then you will find a score of hits but nothing that would provide you with a meaningful guide to overcome it.

TeX and LaTeX are two options I have at hand at the moment as well as Open Source publishing software, but I lack the motivation to start using them immediately. Maybe it would be best to start after edition number twelve, because it would mark the one year anniversary of this magazine. Why not start fresh into the second year.

Important:

A French band – I will not name them – seems like to have the urge to annoy me with their ignorance of the license an earlier edition of this magazine was released under. Everyone should be able to read and in case someone has some difficulties in understanding the license text / or the abstract of it ([link below](#)), then you can ask me. This work is/was/will be released under the Creative Commons, because it provides the largest amount of liberty for all sides. No ... the stuff that is available on the Internetz is not always free.

What you have to do is the following:

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{A review}

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(Note: this exception ONLY deals with bands and their associated labels (see reviews). 3rd parties need a permission from me in case they want to add these writings to their sites. Links without any texts are allowed though.)

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Cheers

Oneyoudontknow (oneyoudontknow at yahoo dot de)

Note:

As usual, no cover artworks were used, due to the messed up situation in International Copyright. If you want to see this changed, then do something about the currently messed up situation.

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Outlook



Interview – Ov Howness

Hey how are you ... please introduce yourself a bit and give the readers some background of your interest in the black metal scene. Was there a band or a sound that woke your interest in it?

I'm doing good. I am Mark, that's it.

Well my interest in black metal began probably like many others, first hearing bands like Emperor, Mayhem, Burzum, and Satyricon and a lot of others that came out during that time. Imagery and topics in the lyrics were somewhat interesting, but to me it was always, and still is, completely the sounds and moods created within that music, it was a take on dark music that I really liked. It's hard to think of what some of the initial moments that had drawn me into this style of music, it was so long ago, perhaps parts of Emperor's *In the Nightside Eclipse* and *Storm of the Lights Bane* by Dissection, I know those are 2 of the more well known, somewhat major releases of that time but that is how my interests are, I like what is good, I like quality, I am not into something just because it's obscure.

Let me start right away: How are the responses on your two outputs been so far?

The new CD is still very new, it was only just released in August, but the response has defiantly been very good so far. I think those that give it a listen will recognize that it is at least something worthy of taking notice of. There is so much music released now it is so difficult to get heard, I only hope people who are fans of this style of metal just check it out. I really would like to just let more time pass and let the album begin to find its' place in this massive world of metal.

The demo of course has been out sometime now and the feedback has been great. It was only made available as a download and I must say many have downloaded it, I am pleased with that. I really believe these songs have the ability to stand out.

Why did you release your first demo on MP3s? What made you choose this type of spreading the message?

With the current situation regarding downloading, it's so easy get music. That of course is not a good thing for a full release where a band has put so much work into it, but it does allow something like a demo to get out there quite easily. The simple purpose of the demo was achieved, to introduce this project, and done without the costs of running CDs, and again, the purpose was achieved.

Following the argument from the previous question, what would your opinion on downloads in general be? How do you see any advantage coming from them and are those artists justified when they complain about their inability to make some money with music today?

The advantage is as I have used it, to get the music out easily and with minimal costs. The other side of that is, yeah, unfortunate. It is simply much too easy to get a full new release just with a few clicks, way too easy. Everyone is justified with their complaints. If somehow just the interest increasing for a band led to other methods of making money that would be better but there is nothing other than live shows perhaps that provides some ability to make money. Some people say that many fans will buy the CD if they like the album they have downloaded, but that is too hopeful to think, that's not realistic. It's a tough problem to solve. For myself, I approach making music with keeping all this in mind. I would like to remind that CDs still sound much better than MP3s, we forget about that sometimes.

Do you use iTunes and all the other download sites in the Internet? Might they be the forthcoming model for spreading music?

The new album is now available on these download sites, it is a major method of selling music today so I use it. They will be around always of course, and I may use them for releases, but I will always make CDs, that format and even other formats should always be available. If someone really likes a release then they usually like to have the real thing, with artwork, lyrics etc., especially in metal, that is how we are.

Let us talk a bit about your two releases. Several aspects might surprise a listener.

- 1. The tracks have slightly different titles**
- 2. Their lengths differ a bit**

Why the differences? What changed between these two outputs and would you be able to shed some light on your reasons behind them? Have they been re-recorded or re-arranged?

I felt the songs on the demo were worthy of being released on a proper CD album, I did not want to leave them behind just yet. These 4 tracks were remixed and mastered and also additional music was also done for the album to make it complete. Other than small changes were made, it's more just because time has passed and the CD will outlive the demo, so I just made small revisions regarding lengths and titles to something I was more pleased with.

I must admit, the final outcome was not planned, the direction was left up to the music and the songs that came out. The album was made around the songs written and not the other way around. There was a little conscious thought of direction but it generally came from the song writing process. The Ov Hollowness sound will always evolve, they may be shorter songs or longer songs and any direction lyrically, depends on what the surrounding influences bring out during the times of writing.

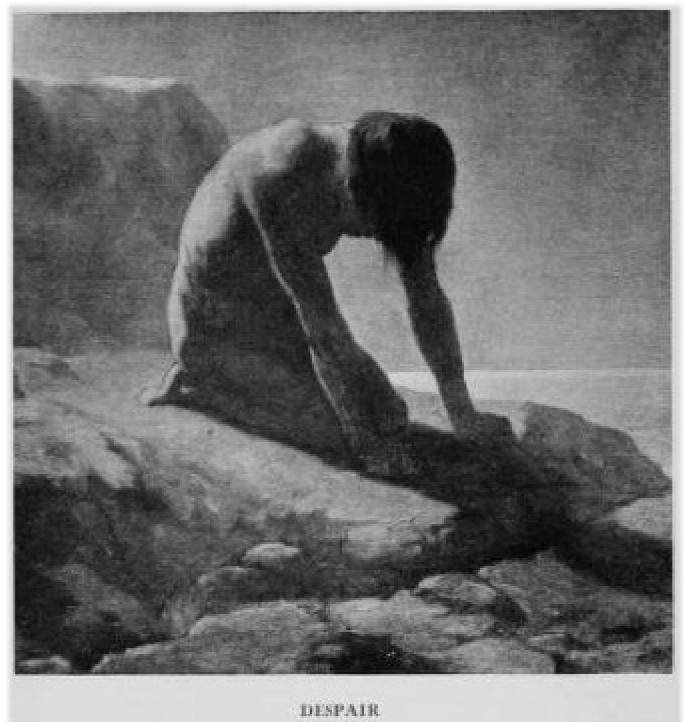
According to your MySpace site the idea of this band has existed for some time but has only come into being very recently. What prevented you from starting this band earlier?

Making music, and further, making an album takes a focused attention on that task until the work is done. It is a dedication, more so when you do all the work yourself and learn how to use the tools yourself. I have always written and recorded but the time just seemed right to record the music properly. I would like to have started the band earlier, I have been living my life, creating any art can take the need to remove yourself from what we might call 'average' everyday life, that's what I had to do in order to come back to creating art, or music, unfortunately it took too long. haha.

What makes this release so interesting is the amount of different facets that have been woven into the music. Clean vocals (Enshrouded in Obscurity; they remind me on Vintersorg by the way), rock riffs (Silence), some nice solo parts (several tracks) ... just to name some aspects. How does someone have to imagine the process of song-writing? Were the songs written over a longer period of time or did you have some sort of a 'volume of work' and all came somehow by itself?

It's interesting, because I do have songs complete and ready to be recorded, and I have had them for years. Diminished though, ended up consisting of all new material, it really came down to where my head was at when putting the tracks together, that mood seemed to form the direction of the album. ha, you noticed the rock riffs. When song writing, I do come up with riffs but I found that most of the material on Diminished came from getting an idea in my mind and then grabbing the guitar and working it out. As far as using different elements, it's hard for me not to, and this I hope, is only the beginning.

Do you scrap a lot of ideas and return to the scratch in case you are not satisfied with the final result? The Norwegian band Deathlike (see edition number seven) not only re-recorded nearly an entire album, also their forth-coming one seems to be far far away. How do you handle such an issue?



Generally I don't scrap ideas, once the process is going, working on a song, I would not continue it if it wasn't what I like. Sure, there are parts that are great but remain incomplete until the work continues. I have some really great opening riffs lying around so to speak, but can't seem to bring the sound around just yet.

I can totally understand re-recording, I kind of like that idea, to bring a song into a new time and recording session if it is good but perhaps suffered some obscurity in its initial incarnation.

Keyboards and sound samples (dark ambient-influenced) play an important role in your music. Do you have a certain fancy for this dark art and will this aspect see an increase in the future or will they be kept in this minor role? Are there certain artists you use as a source of inspiration?

They add or enforce a certain feel to the music. This element, at least up until now, has been somewhat experimental, my background is guitar, this is new for me. I am really pleased with what I was able to do with these different sounds and if it suits the songs it will continue. Music that is used in movies was somewhat of an inspiration, I find myself always observing something like that. As for band influences on the use of keyboard and sound samples, I like what was done in Coldworld, and I am sure the Burzum influence can be heard.

'Progressive depressive black metal'(1), this is a term used by you on your MySpace blog. What does it mean to you and how would you describe it? What kind of facets does or should it contain for instance?



I am not sure of the relevance of that term anymore, (even though I did mention it) or any term, I find it tough to describe what Ov Hollowness sounds like. At first I thought perhaps it is depressive black metal but just listen you would conclude it is not. That was the idea with the term, perhaps depressive black metal but progressing beyond that. The atmosphere of the CD is dark and depressive but I have incorporated other styles and sounds. I would rather not say more regarding that and leave it to the listener.

There is no 'filler' music, or even filler sections within these songs. Each track has its own direction, and it's own place to take the listener. (1) Why is it so important for you to create this kind of density and consistency? A lot of bands in the depressive black metal branch have longer interludes and pauses in

their art. How do you see this type of 'interruption' of the flow of the music? Cannot such also be used in a meaningful way?

I agree, in fact what is done with depressive black metal I would not call 'filler', the repetitiveness and ambience is done with purpose in most of that music. I think you get more useless noise when it comes to playing that would be described as a 'jam', like you got with some 'rock' bands. You perhaps misunderstood me, I do feel that long interludes and pauses are great, anything can be good if done well, and depressive black metal musicians do that well. Listen to the track Crestfallen, that was intended to have a mechanical type of sound, I did not even put in any drum fills, and I feel the track doesn't get boring.

To answer the first question, this goes back to the idea that the album is considered more of a collection of songs rather than songs put together to make the one piece album. To take that even further, I make music with the intention of the style of the song in mind. Like its meant to be a slow paced song that takes the listener this way or its a fast song that is meant to do take the listener another way. Listen to Rest in Chaos, it is meant to drive its fast pace all throughout to the end, or the opening track Diminished to the Cold keeps its pace a feel throughout with its ups and downs so to speak. I made songs, and not so much the album as a whole.

Aside from this aspect, you also avoid repetition of certain passages. Why did you choose this particular style and has it benefits over the verse-chorus scheme?

That's another reason why the term depressive black metal doesn't quite fit Ov Hollowness, the repetition is there but not overwhelming. In the end, the arrangements are how I chose what works best for what's happening at that moment, that is an obvious response but I mean I purposely turn the direction of the sound when the time is right.

What about the recording process? How does this take place?

Once an idea is started, with a simple riff or a pattern in my mind I record it and begin to think of the rest of the song. 'Diminished' was recorded in my small home studio, recording and arranging together is the process. There is not much more to it than that, record each track and work things until I am pleased with it. The vocals for Enshrouded in Obscurity and Crestfallen were recorded at Alchemy Studio in Calgary, Canada, and that was simply because my studio was not available at the time.

I am not the biggest fan of a drum-computer, because bands tend to program it in a too monotonous way, which adds an odd atmosphere to the music. So, is there a chance to see/hear real drums in your music in the future? What would your opinion on releases which come with this 'instrument' be?

I really tried to make the drums get away from that kind of (stereotypical - fake) sound, I think it was achieved well. For programmed drums I think they sound quite good. In the future, I do in fact think the use of real drums will happen, it will be difficult finding someone who will be interested in doing it, but I hope to make it happen somehow. Is the second part of that question referring to my thoughts on programmed drums? If so, it depends on how well they are worked, you will probably agree that something that sounds too mechanical or strict it will take away from the overall song, and interest will be lost, that has to be avoided. It also depends on the style of music, depressive black metal can work with this 'instrument' some styles can, others can not.



Neither the artwork nor the lyrics contain the all too common satanic or anti-Christian references the black metal scene has gained prominence for. What are your

reasons for excluding them? Might they appear on a future release?

The song Rest in Chaos has some of that within it, but it is more Lovecraft inspired. Lyrics have always been a very low priority item in music for me, as a fan that is, only with creating my own songs now have I begun to give them more attention. My other project leans more toward those type of references. They are excluded mainly because it wouldn't fit the music on 'Diminished'. They certainly could appear of future releases, and again, they definitely are part of my other project.

You have also a side-project, don't you? At least your blog at MySpace says so. So, please enlighten us on it. What type of music can we expect from it and what would its status be?

Yes, speaking of the other project. The album is done and recorded. I am carefully planning the mixing process now so as to present it how I want. The name of the project for now is Dark Desires but that could change. They style is much more aggressive than Ov Hollowness, you could call it old school black metal, straight forward black metal, evil and faster paced, along the lines of Mayhem, Dark Funeral, Marduk, and Necrophobic. Some of those songs actually have been written before the Ov Hollowness material. I very much want to get the album right and release it, the songs I feel are just too good not to. There are demo mixes available at the MySpace page. I would also like to add that I also have a 3rd project to come after that one, that album is also relatively close to completion, so it is something not just a concept, it is done, more metal or thrash influenced.

Some words on the development of the black metal scene. How do you see it and how has this genre changed over the years?

It is what it is, here to stay obviously. When I think of black metal I seem to have a different approach than others, to me the music is so much more important than the imagery, so I speak from that point of view.

You can see now how it has found its way into other genres of metal these days. It also has stayed the same in many ways, bands playing songs now that would have fit right along side what came out over 15 years ago. I don't think that's a bad thing, what is bad, is bad music, if the quality and innovation is there then that's great. In some ways I would like to see the sound develop more.

I would like to have your opinion on the following five tracks:

(Note: these were sent anonymous to the band; no indication could be gained from the file name or the file tag)

1: Master Toad & Pollux - Dark Insects of the Catacomb (album: Offer Their Souls)

(Dark Ambient / Ambient)

<http://www.archive.org/details/kof078MasterToadPollux-OfferTheirSouls>

I like this, I have really been into this style of music lately. It is very simple music, minimalist, but what can make something like this good is the artist using these few instrument sounds or tools to create the atmosphere. I have actually created music very similar to this, its part of the unreleased tracks by Ov Hollowness available out there.

2: A Cloud Forest - Black Clouds At Sunset (album: Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep)

(Black Metal)

<http://catchphrazerecords.com/acloudforest/>

Aggressive, but also with a minimal approach. To me complexity doesn't mean a whole lot, its how or if an atmosphere is created. Programmed drums here, I was about to say the song was losing me but the middle had a momentary soft break to keep it interesting, then going out with some heavy keyboard rhythms. It is well done, I don't know what it is, I would guess a one man band. I do think it could use a little more dynamics to keep me interested.



3: Dysphoric - In Infinite (album: Mørke)

(Black Metal)

<http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/Dysphoric>

I like the riff at the beginning, the bass and drums here really don't sound good to me. Not my style of music, getting too 'industrial' sounding for my tastes. Great use of sounds and samples. I hear the atmosphere created but it's not heavy enough to hold my interest. I would not say it's bad, it is well recorded, it's a style that does not interest me.

4: Árbole – Ardina_gc (album: Blezna)

(Soundscapes, Field-recordings, Experimental)

<http://www.archive.org/details/alg054>

What is this? I was trying to place the rumble in the rain, it's like a train or fire burning, like a big one as oppose to the close one at the end. I do listen to sounds like this from time to time, but this did nothing for me, even as sound affects it was not interesting. The composer probably must have better pieces of music, I would hope anyway.

5: Epsilon Eridani - [Tribute To H.P. Lovecraft #05] Where Once Poe Walked
(Dark Ambient, Industrial)
http://www.archive.org/details/dna_85_epsilon_eridani_tribute_to_h_p_lovecraft

All these songs have the same intro, haha. I like more grand sounds like this. This is pretty decent, again not a fan of lyrics so the talking doesn't interest me unless it provides a cool dynamic which it does not so much here. The sounds or music is well crafted, yet simple again. I keep mentioning atmosphere, the 1st track had much more, even though the differences are subtle.

How can people contact you and where can they buy your releases?

Please visit www.myspace.com/ovhollowness, or just message inhollow@gmail.com and a copy can be sent out. It can also be obtained through Hypnotic Dirge Records or The Northern Cold Productions.

Any final comments?

I do ask that people check out this album, the next Ov Hollowness release will take things further so join this journey into darkness. Also keep in mind, it's music, it's always about the music.

Thank you very much for the interview.

Ov Hollowness – Diminished

(Canada; Black Metal)
6 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (42:25)
<http://www.myspace.com/OVhollowNESS>

Ov Hollowness presumably did a lot of things right in the past; this term should not be stretched over excess. They spread the demo version of their demo release as a free download and received some praises for their well-crafted atmospheric black metal art. Only some months after the initial release a more professional debut album has hit the streets and even though the tracks indicate a striking similarity, they do actually differ a bit from each other. The background behind this has been discussed in the interview, so this would be a good source to understand the band's intentions in changing the art a bit. A mere comparison reveals the following:

	Demo			Album	
1	Diminished	09:14		Diminished To The Cold	09:34
2	Cursed	05:08		Silence	06:47
3	Silence	06:44		Enshrouded In Obscurity	07:13
4	Rest in Chaos	05:38		Crestfallen	07:55
5				Rest In Chaos	05:38
6				Cursed to Die Again and Forever	05:18

To sum the changes up a bit:

Two new tracks, a different track order and some minor changes in the lengths and names.

Diminished is a somehow misleading title; especially when considering what was presented above. Atmospheric and depressive black metal aspects have been combined for this release and it is up to the former to dominate the music. Well, in some respect, this review is a revisiting of the demo and the impressions have shifted to a more positive one. Those 'fallacies' to which was referred to in the 3rd edition of this magazine have faded in impact and especially those two new tracks come with a surprising set of sounds and ideas that were impossible to anticipate back then. It might be possible to state that the music has grown in impression. References to Vintersorg – the clean vocals – (Enshrouded in Obscurity) as well as an intro (Cursed to Die Again and Forever) whose arrangements give hints on Elysian Blaze are merely two examples for the variety of influences and sounds on this release. From rock over metal

to dark ambient the listener is guided through a fascinating complexity of sounds and influences and even though Ov Hollowness is 'quite a young band' – see the interview for more explanation on the matter – a certain maturity and as well as red line can be discovered throughout the release. Be it the shifts in the tempo, the variation in the song-writing or the use of atmospheric keyboard elements, the band attempts to keep the listener interested in the art without sounding too pathetically depressive or too overloaded and bombastic. Rest in Chaos might be the most accessible track on this recording; due to the orientation on catchiness as well as the amount of drive that it possesses. The contrast to it might be Enshrouded in Obscurity and this would be one of the new ones; the reasons here are equally obvious: the clean vocals and the haunting atmospheric parts really grab the attention of the listener.

Ov Hollowness did something a lot of young bands do not dare to do: spread their first release for free and see what it will lead to. The focus of getting something in return immediately, seems to be stuck in the heads of the musicians and so the business model of the last century is attempted to be perpetuated in the modern Internet age as well. The irony to see the exact same person complain about the aspect of downloads in times of massive inflation of music outputs gives it a further nice touch. Ah ... anyway, the Canadian band Ov Hollowness should be 'awarded' for their attempt to reach the audience in a modern way, which broke out of the overdone fashion. Whether the same will be said of future releases waits to be seen. It would be illusory to demand that every band should spread their music via a netlabel or the Creative Commons, but the idea to embrace the modern communication technologies is something that adds a nice touch to the progression of the band. Yes, it is a bit too much of praises here, but the emphasis is appropriate, because the overdone mantra of the adverse effects of the Internet and how it is supposedly ruining the cultural environment, makes many people feel sickish about the whole thing. Times are changing and to cling desperately on a failed system will only lead to a catastrophe.

Note:

The CD comes professionally printed with a coloured booklet, which has the lyrics in them.

O.D.I. – Necronomicon I

(Spain; Experimental, Ambient, Drone, Ritual, Noise)

7 Tracks (CD – R.O.N.F. Records) -_-_- (1:13:29)

<http://www.myspace.com/odiritualdrone;>

[http://www.ronfrecords.com/;](http://www.ronfrecords.com/) <http://www.myspace.com/ronfrecords>



This is the second time a review of the Spanish band O.D.I. is discussed in this magazine. The first time they were presented along with the band Akollonizer as part of a somehow extreme split album. Ambient met grindcore... this would sum the impression back then a bit. Necronomicon I would be the latest release of the band and it has quite a considerable length; also in terms of the tracks that range from 5:25 to 14:14.

In case someone is familiar with the oeuvre of the band, the music on 'Necronomicon I' might not come as a surprise. Those who want to explore their art a bit more should direct their attention not only to their MySpace site, but also to the albums which had been uploaded at the Internet Archive and can be downloaded from there for free. Several of these were made available on this site and their style ranges from noise over to ambient with only one constant aspect: experimentation.

A difference becomes obvious from the very beginning: the somehow conceptual approach of the aforementioned split album seems to have been an exception, because the music on this output lacks any even remotely discernable red line. Yet this is only true when you have nothing but the compositions at hand. The booklet reveals something else:

The work is based on a Necronomicon book of H.P. Lovecraft. The rituals contained here are authentic.
(Taken from the booklet)

And there the problems begin. I have serious doubts about whether it is really possible to listen to this output on a sunny day, while sitting on a front porch and enjoying some easy digestible horror literature. The atmosphere of the music and of the surrounding environment would not fit in any respect. 'Necronomicon I' is of a quite dark and often minimalist type, with chants and sounds whose volume is on such low level that it is necessary to concentrate on them and not to have it as a background ambience. It would not work this way ... because this release wants to be explored. Time, energy and patience are necessary for it. Unlike on the aforementioned split album, O.D.I. crafted quite a complex piece of art.

For a reviewer it is difficult to write on this album, because the sheer complexity of the music, the every shifting sounds, noises and textures make it tough to give a good overview over the performance. Nevertheless, some constant elements can be identified:

- ❖ The vocals. They – male and female – remind on the ones used on the "La Puerta del Hades" album. Chants, 'inverted' passages, intelligible murmurs, echoing in the singing ... these all appear in one way or another on both albums, while those on the 'Necronomicon I' are generally more intense and more ritualistic. A touch of Buddhist chanting appears as well and together with overtone passages, they add a mystical charm to the music.
- ❖ The layers. Even though this term is pretty meaningless by itself, it still sheds some light on an important characteristic: the structure of the music. While listening to the compositions one will notice that, there is (nearly) always more than one layer at a time. Even though some sounds are nothing more than a vague texture in the background, they add something to the atmosphere and help to focus the attention of the listener a bit. O.D.I.'s music is complex, but rather in the way and style, it is perceived as a whole.
- ❖ The noise effects. A lot of these can be found on this release ... a lot. They range from calm to intense, but are never aggressive or too dominant; in the sense that some aspects are drowned through this. Generally, the music was structured in the following way: drone or ambient textures in the background and guitars or other instruments in the front. The arrangements follow a certain logic and support each other. It is dark ambient mixed with facets of the noise genre, while the latter plays only a minor role here.

The tracks differ a lot from each other and each of these has their own unique sound and set of atmosphere. Some are more intense and deep, while others are more minimalist and therefore less appealing. **El Exorcismo Zi Dingir** is a short but very ritualistic one, which has a clear structure and design. It is very easy to get into the monotonous shamanic beats of the drums. Compared with the rest of the album, this one track is an exception; not only in terms of the length. **Invocacion De Las Cuatro Puertas** for instance is quite different. As the title already suggests, the concept behind this composition is an invocation and such is also delivered quite neatly. After a long introduction, the music



proceeds into the chanting of mystical texts. From a broader perspective, one has to recognize that the latter example dominates this album. The song-writing is as such as to emphasize long passages of textures of various sounds and noises, while in between 'fragments' of vocals were woven into. Considerably dark and haunting are two terms appropriate to describe the performance neatly.

Time, it is vital in understanding this release. The richness in facets and the overall complexity prohibit an easy listening per se and also the lyrics give no clear indication on the parts of the Necronomicon they have been taken from; if such is the case at all. None of the texts were printed in the booklet! Moreover, the ritualistic aspect of the approach was done very well indeed. To immerse into this weird and fascinating world is actually possible with this music, because the performance of O.D.I. differs from all the approaches I have listened to before. Density and complexity work as a unit here, but they need some time to unfold their true beauty and potential. To be frank, the first spin left quite a bitter taste and it took some effort to take another trip. Yet, the more the release is explored, the more the outré kind of the art might be enjoyed.

Remember how Lovecraft described the music in his works:

At intervals the clang of a strange bell shivered over the onyx city, answered each time by a peal of mystic music made up of horns, viols, and chanting voices. And from a row of tripods on a galley round the high dome of the temple there burst flares of flame at certain moments; for the priests and people of that city were wise in the primal mysteries, and faithful in keeping the rhythms of the Great Ones as set forth in scrolls older than the Pnakotic Manuscripts.

(Taken from: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0600031h.html#37>)

But less in this fashion:

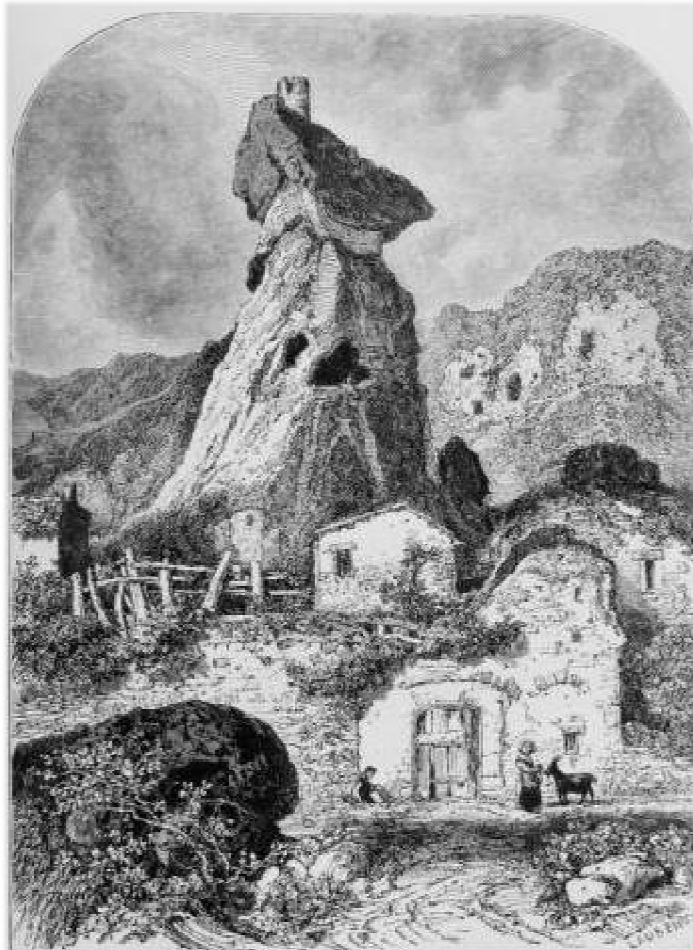
There were insane shouts and harrowing screams, soul-chilling chants and dancing devil-flames; and, the frightened messenger added, the people could stand it no more. [...]The muffled beat of tom-toms was now faintly audible far, far ahead; and a curdling shriek came at infrequent intervals when the wind shifted. [...]There are vocal qualities peculiar to men, and vocal qualities peculiar to beasts; and it is terrible to hear the one when the source should yield the other. Animal fury and orgiastic license here whipped themselves to daemoniac heights by howls and squawking ecstasies that tore and reverberated through those nighted woods like pestilential tempests from the gulfs of hell. Now and then the less organized ululation would cease, and from what seemed a well-drilled chorus of hoarse voices would rise in sing-song chant that hideous phrase or ritual:[...]

(Taken from: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0600031h.html#04>)

The former of these examples refers to a basic and common ritual scene, similar to those performed by native tribes on this planet. In the latter excerpt, an additional amount of weirdness and insanity dominates the scene; something to which Lovecraft generally referred to when characters attempted to get in contact with the Old Ones. O.D.I.'s performance lies a bit in between. When you listen to the tunes, then you are not able to imagine the scenery and to build it up in front of your eyes. Rather, the sound and the style remain at a certain distance, which the listener is unable to cross. It is possible to listen to the tunes and rhythms but impossible to thoroughly immerse in these. Nevertheless, compared with a lot of other album, whose concept had been the same or similar, the Spanish band did a really good job in creating a Lovecraft-inspired atmosphere.

Note:

Only 50 copies exist of this album ... and it is therefore pretty rare and hard to get. Hopefully it will be released in the future.



Xedh & Berio – Feeixa

(Spain; Experimental)

1 Track (MP3 – Netlabel: Alg-a) - _ _ - (9:17)

<http://www.archive.org/details/alg-set04>;

<http://www.alg-label.com/Feeixa>;

<http://www.berio.alg-a.org/>;

<http://www.xedh.org/>

In the world of instruments there are a lot that can be described as 'pleasing to the ear'. Whose sound is such ethereal that the listener's thoughts will wander off to shores and spheres of the imagination. Remember the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice and how his play was able to soften the hearts of some of the wildest and fiercest creatures in Hades. And nothing but a harp was used for it. Violin, Cello ... the list is endless. On the other side of the spectrum though, this would be the instruments with an 'offensive' tone, the variety is rather small; especially when you exclude the 20th century. Bagpipes may be of a kind some would refer to as having quite a hideous and noisy sound. Well ... this is the general case but imagine how they can torment someone once electronics comes into play. Now guess what Feeixa is all about?

Xedh (Miguel A. García) and Berio Molina are two artists whose performance combines the sound of a Galician Bagpipe – played by the latter of the two – and additional noise and sound manipulations. The result is the following: Throbbing and oscillating electronic sounds of the one hand and shrill and drony ones on the other. This mixture is quite peculiar and an intense listening experience. Not only is the siren-like sound of the pipe quite disturbing at times, the additional drone and noise layers intensify this impression considerably. Chaos plays a predominant role in this composition and its impact can especially be felt in the arrangements of the motives or ideas. Improvisation as a descriptive term used by the label is quite appropriate to sum up the impression one gets while listening to this ten-minute composition. There is no real structure. Rather, some kind of play of the instruments and their struggle for dominance and of throwing ideas to and fro can be discovered. The chances to find a larger audience for this piece of art are not likely. Fans of noise and drone might want to give Feeixa a chance though.

Slime in the Current - Pissed on Resurrectine

(USA; Black Metal)

10 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (53:42)

<http://www.myspace.com/slimeinthecurrent>

A first impression of this album was: Aeternus or to be more precise, Ares and how he uses his voice. The commanding style of the deep growls appears on Slime in the Current's debut album as well. Yet compared with the art of the Norwegians the emphasis is more on the guitars here. Nevertheless, also some similarities in the atmospheres and the overall style can be found, so a certain audience who should give this release a try was already identified. When speaking of Aeternus, then both black as well as death metal influences can be referred to. Albums like '... and So the Night Became' as well as 'Shadows of Old' can be pointed towards as references, but the song-writing seems to have been taken from the latter one; those expansive and long compositions used by the Norwegians make no appearance here.

Slime in the Current play generally fast and powerful black metal, which comes with a surprising density as well as consistency. Despite the emphasis on a rather high tempo, the band avoided an endless monotony of blast beats. Slower interludes make an appearance in several compositions, while a track like 'Word is Dead' reminds on the death doom genre. Retained Hunger to Demoralize, the



last track of this album, takes the listener to even more obscure and rather unexpected realms. Did the band ran out of ideas or was there one band member who desperately wanted to have his share on the album as well, but was refused any other spot aside the last one possible? Not only is the music in this composition exceedingly slow, towards the end everything merges together into an indistinguishable noisy something. Quite a weird way to close the album.

Pissed on Resurrectine is a lot of fun and you should really get it; especially if you are fond of the Norwegian band Aeternus. Slime in the Current deliver ... and they deliver on a high scale. A lot of really cool riffs and arrangements, thundering drums in the background and a vocalist, whose one weakness is that he sounds too much like Ares, this and nothing else can be found on the debut of the American band. Really recommended.

Note:

The album comes professionally printed. No lyrics were printed on the cardboard sheet with which the jewelcase CD is distributed.



Rostau – To Die and to the Stars Ascend

(Italy; Drone/Doom Metal, Ambient, Experimental)

4 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (36:36)

<http://www.rostaudoom.com/>

This band has already ceased to be. They are no more. One album and they bit the dust and wandered off to different shores. Yet even though they snuffed it after only this one piece of art, their release is of a most peculiar type. When I opened the letter, in which I received the CD some time ago, Rostau included a tiny sheet of paper with some lines written on it. As these have some importance for this review, parts of it are quoted below:

Please visit www.rostaudoom.com for more info on the concepts behind this album. This record isn't only about music, it can't be fully comprehended and enjoyed without additional info.

Indeed. So, let us take a look at the site then and see whether it proves to be useful understanding *To Die and to the Stars Ascend* a bit better.

Well, if you expect essay like texts – see the lyrics of **Cradle of Filth** or **Bal Sagoth** for instance – then disappointment might take over all too soon, because this Italian band kept the information at a surprisingly minimalist level. There are no epic stories, no in-depth essays and no complex (flash?) presentation of their idea behind this work. But the visitor will be able to get some hints on the concept used for this first and only album of Rostau. So, why not shed some light on it:

The track lengths:

1. Celestial Hive Mind	11:01:111
2. Ahriman of the Thousand Sons	11:01:111
3. To Die and to the Stars Ascend	11:01:111
4. 3.33.333	03:33:333

You do not see such on a daily basis, do you? Bands do rarely play with this type and thing and try to write music of a certain length; 1349 did this on their Hellfire album with the title track and the Finnish band H.I.M.'s debut had comes with a somehow ridiculous 66:06 in overall length – oh yes, this Ville Valo is a really evil guy.

The lyrics:

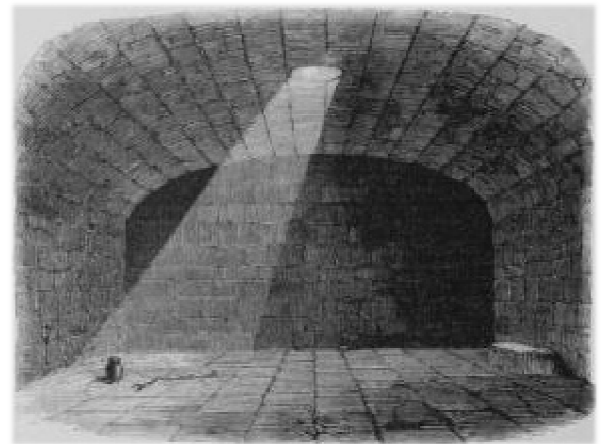
Two out of four compositions have texts and they appear not only on the homepage but also in the digipack; this album has no booklet. Written in a rather free style, they rather tend to tell some sort of story whose content the listener has to explore rather than experiencing or understanding it by mere listening to the tunes. The background of the release is rather narrow – Warhammer 40K; life and death – but covers a topic a lot of bands rarely touch.

The music:

Yes, if you believe it or not, some words will also be spent on the core aspect of every music album: was this art well crafted and how fits everything together? Let us discuss the tracks separately:

1. Celestial Hive Mind

The idea behind this track is the race of the Tyranid, whom some might know from the Warhammer 40K universe. It is also possible to play them in the Dawn of War II edition of the video game. A mere glance on the pictures of them lets a person shudder, because their looks remind on a nightmare that has become flesh. Worse than Orcs and definitely more vicious, they are a species with an unquenchable hunger and thirst. They ravage galaxy after galaxy and with no end in sight.



Rostau wrote about their existence and life in some detail, but the actual style of the music proves to be of a kind that might come as surprise. While a black metal band would most certainly have interpreted this emphasis on war and destruction as a welcome invitation to unleash a barrage of brutal riffs on the listener, played on a high tempo and accompanied by an ultra fast doublebass thunderstorm, this Italian band did something entirely different. Melancholic or even sad are two terms appropriate to describe the performance here. The music is quite calm – doomy some may say or even depressive – and not really heavy or even metal. Slightly distorted guitars play a simple tune – later a lead-guitar joins in –, drums add a nice and slow beat, the vocals appear now and then with some hissing and murmuring, while the background a vaguely discernable drone/ambient texture enriches the music with a nice space-like atmosphere.

2. Ahriman of the Thousand Sons

A stark difference between the tracks exists and it takes only a few second to reveal this. It is not only the overall sound that creates a deeper and lasting impression, it is the change in the style and the way the music is presented that might leave a listener baffled about what is going on in this track. Not only is there a change to black/death metal – again played in a slow fashion –, the overall concept has put a clearer emphasis on the vocals here. So much that the role of each facet of the music seems to have been reversed.

To make explain the contents of the music and how the lyrics fit into this a bit easier, a quote from the band's homepage can really help to clear matters up a bit:

The focus of the song is the ritual, starting with the solo guitars and keyboards in the central part and proceeding with the dark invocation of Ahriman chanting "I know your Ways, oh Changer of Ways..."

(Source: http://www.rostaudoom.com/_notes.htm#2)

A good amount of insights can also be gained from this site:

<http://warhammer40k.wikia.com/wiki/Ahriman>

This track has a metal feeling – guitars and vocals –, but the concept has not shifted much. Rostau prefers this slow and very dark type of music. A slighter impact can be identified in the keyboards, whose part was somehow lessened for this track and they only appear rather seldom but then in a more accentuated and clearer way. Interestingly, while the first part of this composition has quite an aggressive touch, the end comes with this melancholic style again.

3. To Die and to the Stars Ascend

Rostau described this track in the following way:



The song is clearly divided in 3 sections. The first is a symbol of life, the central represents the process of dying, and the last stands for the first stages of death.

The following is important to note: this track is an instrumental and it sounds this way. Long passages, a lot of repetition and a mixture of doom metal with drone and ambient influences would sum up the impressions succinctly. The way the arrangements work together remind on a long outro. Melancholy and uncertainty are expressed in the music. Passages remind on the American band Earth and fans of this group might want to give this track a try.

Life – Dying – Death, these are the three parts in which this track was divided and it is up to the second one to take up the major part of it. Interesting are the similarities between the first and the last segment. Echoes of the world of the living are hovering in the air, similar to the soul as the physical sphere comes close to breathe for the very last time.

Two further references should be given:

- ❖ The Platonian belief that a soul, whose ascension to the heavens failed, returns to the source of its earthen origin again and has to remain there for 10.000 years. Death in its broadest sense becomes a struggle and is not a simple form of relief; which is the common idea of the Judeo-Christian myth.
- ❖ Reincarnation, for what Hinduism has become somehow famous for.

Death does not necessarily have to be associated with an end, because it was also described as a new beginning and one more step into a new existence.

4. 3.33.333

The weirdest of all tracks is the last one. Even though the listener might suspect otherwise, for the recording of this track real guitars were used. In case someone is interested in the whole background and process of creating 3.33.333, the homepage of the band is a good source for finding the necessary information. Lovecraftian, this might sum the impression on this performance up in some respect. Challenging layers of noise, odd and somehow disturbing noise elements, electronic manipulations as well as dronish facets in the background are facets of this short track. It would be not far fetched to describe the last track as a counterpoint to the previous tracks.

To sum the impressions up a bit:

To Die and to the Stars Ascend is a complex album, whose content wants to be explored by the listener. Vitrally important is the use of headphones while listening to it, because otherwise facets like background textures might slip the listener's attention. Yet my general point of criticism holds true for this one as well. Just imagine you have nothing but the files at hand, then the intentions of the band remain hidden; not every homepage will be archived for good. It is this aspect that leaves a slightly bitter taste, but the overall perception of the release is nothing but very positive. Somehow the old phrase of "nomen est omen" applies to this work. Get this release and turn up the volume. Fill the air and the void with the sounds of the Italian band. Give the waves a chance to ascend to this black space that surrounds our small planet.

Final note:

This release can either be downloaded from the band's homepage (Mp3s + jpg files but without explanation) or bought from Rostau for a surprisingly small amount of money. Moreover, the homepage has some quite positive words on spreading the art via p2p networks.

Liktjern - Kulde, Pest & Død

(Norway; Black Metal)

4 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ - _ (23:30)

<http://www.myspace.com/454994123>; <http://www.myspace.com/finalearthbeatprod>

It opens with a bang. It opens with a shot. It opens with the sound of a gun and then the raw black metal is unleashed upon the listener. Ildjarn without the noise and Darkthrone's Panzerfaust or Transilvanian Hunger come to the mind while listening to the first release of the Norwegian band Liktjern. Kulde, Pest & Død attempts to bring up memories of the older days of the black metal scene, through a somehow basic set of ideas and concepts. Yet this strict interpretation is by no means everything. The band tried to avoid a too stark limitation in the style and used keyboards in order to create a counterbalance to the harsh nature of the guitars. Examples why this works pretty well can be found in Morkets Herre – dark ambient-like texture in the background at times – for instance and also the opening of Mannen Med Ljennen – otherwise influenced by Ulver's Nattens Madigral release – comes with a short play of the keys.

Liktjern's release has a surprisingly large amount of different facets, of which the variety in the last composition is the most remarkable one. Basically, three different segments and styles had been merged into one and it works. Rather raw black metal is the dominating style throughout the album and the band never moves away from this path, even though the production is not constant over the whole release; different recording sessions are the obvious conclusion. To be more clearly, there are changes in the volume and power of the instruments, which result in slightly different atmospheres and tensions.

Nevertheless, the basic elements rarely shift over the course of the album. Ice cold guitars with a raw sound are the foundation of the music and they are accompanied by the drums – yes, real ones – in creating this special atmosphere of the early days of the black metal scene. You should keep in mind the following: even though this seems to be the first release of the band, their existence dates back to 1996 (!). Yes, fourteen years have passed since, but it was only in 2008



that Likbjerg became reality. Some ideas or projects need some time until they become flesh. According to the band's biography – visit their MySpace page in order to read it – nothing but rehearsal recordings of the 'early days' have remained, but maybe they are of a quality that would justify a future release.

Kulde, Pest & Død, dark and 'negative' words were used for a sinister first opus. Likbjerg leaves no doubts about their roots and archetypes and their art is anything but modern. Nice small facets – the bell in the opener, as well as the choir (emulated by keys) – work as counterpoints to the old-school black metal. Nothing modern, nothing nice ... art of a time that has passed by for some years already. Well, the references and have been mentioned above, but one further one should be added: Musta Surma; listen to their first demo and you will get the idea.

Note:

The release is currently professionally printed by the Italian label Final Earthbeat Productions and will be released in November 2010.

Inferniti - Nihilistic Fullmoon Worship (2010 – unreleased)

(USA; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ - _ (11:44)

<http://www.reverbnation.com/inferniti>; <http://www.myspace.com/inferniti>

Chances are pretty good that hardly anyone has ever heard the name of this band so far. The reasons for this are obvious: it is a quite young one and this would be their first release. Nevertheless, the persons behind this project have received some attention in the recent years; especially on the Metal Archives. Two members of the old-school black metal band Astrum came together and created this new band, whose style, surprise surprise, could be described as Kosmokrater – Timpaler/Mulciber's project – gone better produced and nasty. The following should be emphasised: Kosmokrater would be the project of Tim Mulciber, while Inferniti is one of Riktor. It is important to keep this separation in mind, especially as there are similarities in the sound and style.

Oh yeah ... Inferniti is different from the other currently active projects. It has neither the primitive minimalism of Kosmokrater or Blackthrone, nor has it the punkish old-school vibe of Astrum. This time the road leads towards some sort of 'old' thrash metal with some sickish vocals. Every track is shorter than three minutes; every track comes with quite straightforward music without too many progressive elements, and every track is drenched in a sickish odour, which drips out of the speakers the moment the music is turned on. Underground metal ... this is what you will get on this release ... and nothing else. The band is heading for Sarcophago & Behelit so fans of these might want to give Inferniti a try.



Taarma - Reflecting Hateful Energy (Tribute to Xasthur)

(Pakistan; Black Metal)

4 Tracks (CD – Sabbathid Records) - _ - _ (26:33)

<http://www.taarma.cjb.net/>;

<http://www.myspace.com/sabbathid>;

<http://sabbathidrecords.cjb.net/>

Xasthur is no more and it can be debated whether their passing has a significant impact on the black metal genre. Some refer to this band as the archetype for all that went wrong in the scene and as a negative example of the US-bm-type especially. Others point to it as a prominent example for the depressive branch of the genre and praise some of their works quite excessively. The truth might lie in between these two positions. When it comes to Taarma, then he – the person behind it of course – might rather defend the latter attitude towards American band. For what reasons should they release a tribute album if not to honour them?

In some respect, it is only natural to see this Pakistan band adding covers of Xasthur on a release, because their own art is not far away from what the

Americans have created over the years. Maybe it would be fair to state them to be their archetype, the main source of inspiration, so it makes a lot of sense to pay tribute to Malefic in one way or another. Even though these four tracks on Reflecting Hateful Energy (Tribute to Xasthur) were supposedly recorded over a period of several years (2006-2010), as a listener you do not hear much of a difference in between them. These would not only be minuscule, but the whole range covers not only the sound and atmosphere, it is basically a very close interpretation of the performance of the American band.

You see, close would be an exaggeration. Taarma might have had in mind to do some exact type of cover versions, something without much of a difference to the original. A comparison reveals the following:

Taarma			Xasthur	
Consumed by a Dark Paranoia	03:43		Consumed by a Dark Paranoia	3:40
Reflecting Hateful Energy	07:27		Reflecting Hateful Energy	7:55; 7:18
Prison of Mirrors	09:20		The Prison of Mirrors	12:42
Doomed by Howling Winds	06:03		Doomed by Howling Winds	10:30; 10:37; 10:25

Those similarities end here in some respect as the Pakistani band cut two of the tracks short.

- ❖ Prison of Mirrors lacks the 'acoustic' part at the end.
- ❖ Doomed by Howling Winds lacks the calmer segment as well.

(The track lengths of the cover version give clear indications on where to look in the original)

So, Taarma seem to have a certain fancy for the metal part of the Xasthur art and refuses to take all facets into their art as well. The target audience for this release is quite obvious. One difference between these two groups should be emphasised: the Pakistani one refuses to use some of the extreme noises of the American one: those metallic screams/vocals by Malefic, those balancing issues of the instruments as well as sterile sound of the some of the works do not appear on Reflecting Hateful Energy. Rather, a dark and very atmospheric but also inoffensive approach was used for the interpretations. Xasthur's vibe and style was closely interpreted, but to see/hear this lack comes a bit of a surprise.

Casus - Redemption Through Perversion

(Greece; Black/Death Metal)

4 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (13:51)

<http://www.myspace.com/casusextreme>

Every listener has his or her preferences, has a certain preferences that might turn him or her on/off. It could be as simple as a certain arrangement, sound or keyboard tone, once such appears it is basically over; an all too common problem on review sites. To me it is the following: all instruments play the same fucking melody. There are songs which I am basically unable to listen to, because the band had nothing better to do then reducing the melodies to one line only. Audio torment would be a proper phrase for it.

Well, this introduction should make clear what I do not like on this demo by the Greek band Casus. Let us name it: shallowness. Is it a pity? Yes! Guess what the band used on this very album: an accordion. It is always so nice to hear it, because the atmosphere, which is created through this instrument, forms a nice counter-point to the harshness of the black metal art. Remember how the Norwegian band Morgul attempted to emulate a similar effect in their track 'Ballad of Revolt' and how well everything merged together in it. Casus are still a good deal away from the qualities the aforementioned band was able to reach, but a basis was nevertheless laid out on this demo. To hear it ruined leaves a bitter taste.

Casus try to be different and this is a good thing. They avoid the all too common clichés a lot of black metal bands try to follow and even though this would be their first demo, it has some surprising moments up the sleeves. Be it the vocals with their rather gothic-influenced narrative style, be it some occasional punkish undertones in the riffs or the surprising amount of interludes/breaks, those three tracks (plus an intro) give hints on a potential that seems to be buried there. With some work on the compositions, a better production and rather independent melody lines Casus

might be able to create something really fascinating in the future. Decadent Waltz is already more than good to listen to ...

As Vampiric Shades and Belial Winds – Air Burial (2010 – unreleased)

(Austria; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) - _ _ _ - (20:31)

<http://www.myspace.com/avsbw>

To make one thing clear from the beginning: this release was sent to me by the band and not by a label. Furthermore, it is still unreleased, so you have to wait a bit until you can lay your hands on it. Rumours have it that the band has been able to get in touch with a label since, but I do not want to wander off into the realm of speculation. I should further note that this is by no means a sole example for me recently.

On the topic: The origins of the band are quite peculiar and reflect the changing tides of our ages. Even though it was founded in Brazil in 1996 (!) and released their first demo in 1998 – please note that this has been the band's only release so far –, not much has happened since. Well, except for a change in location for the main person behind As Vampiric Shades and Belial Winds: he moved to Austria in 2003. It still took some year to get the band restarted and the band was only re-activated in 2008. Being a one-man band at first Volkdlack released a first single in 2009 and gathered additional musicians around later. Now it is 2010 and a full line-up presents the first release with this new line-up.

(The story in a nutshell if you like; the sources were two flyers which came along with the CD)

Air Burial is the name of this output and it refers to a custom of Asian nomads. It was practised several centuries before our era and even writers like Cicero wrote about it (#). Aside from this reference to the Tibetan practise, Neil Gaiman's book *Sandman* played a major influence for this recording: [...] *a tale of hate and vengeance where the weak ends up in a condition of total oblivion* – *Air Burial*; source: flyer. The artwork was done by the American artist Jonathan Foerster and was entitled *Sonnet from the North*.



With all these rather far reaching conceptual background, the expectations on the music are rather high and the question arises whether the band is really able to stand up to this. Well, it only takes a couple of minutes to realize that AVSaBW's art does not follow the generic black metal formula. With a surprisingly melodic as well as conceptually broad approach in terms of the song-writing and arrangements, this band offers a type of black metal that combines progressive elements with a solid aggressive foundation. In terms of the riffs influences from genres like melodic death metal make also an appearance. The idea of balancing the instruments and the atmosphere to a great deal might have been something the band had in mind while writing this album. This resulted in the following: even though the band has a certain preference for fast played music, they refuse to limit their oeuvre to it. Again and again the tempo is taken back and calmer moments often make way for solo guitar parts. These are generally well done and work fine with the music. Keyboards do not appear on this release and the sound of a bell in "To the Act of Blood" comes as a real surprise.

Black Vomit, the last track of this recording, would be a Sarcophago cover. Compared with the other compositions on *Air Burial* it has more of a punch in the face attitude, due to the high tempo as well as the straightforward approach of the music. Compared with the original those high-pitched screams do not appear and AVSaBW's cover version is sticks to a mixture between black and thrash the elements. Such adds a nice touch to the whole approach and makes it distinguishable from the original.

This 'Austrian' band does not attempt to follow any of the modern trends. No keyboards and no depressive influences can be found on this release. Interestingly, also of the old days of the band hardly anything has been taken over to the latest output. AVSaBW's come in an entirely new style and design, come with a new spirit and they try to deliver the music on a high and professional scale. It is a bit difficult to definitely nail the band to a specific band, because the performance is quite eclectic. Melodic death metal meets slightly aggressive black metal – with an emphasis on the latter – would sum it up in some respect. Air Burial is a surprisingly well crafted piece of music, but it needs some time to create a lasting impression.

Note:

The band has made a video clip of their track Air Burial and it will be included in the 'official' version of the release.

#: <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~corff/im/Texte/burial.html>

Index pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/morenonsensepict00learrich>

<http://www.archive.org/details/painterspict00neuh>

<http://www.archive.org/details/englishpict00mann>

<http://www.archive.org/details/famouspict00barsuoft>

<http://www.archive.org/details/frenchpict00gree>

<http://www.archive.org/details/greekpict00maha>

<http://www.archive.org/details/italianpict00mann>

<http://www.archive.org/details/josephpennellspi00pennuoft>

Outlook

More interviews (a lot of them are pending and just wait for the answers)

Reviews

Essays (several are in the works)

